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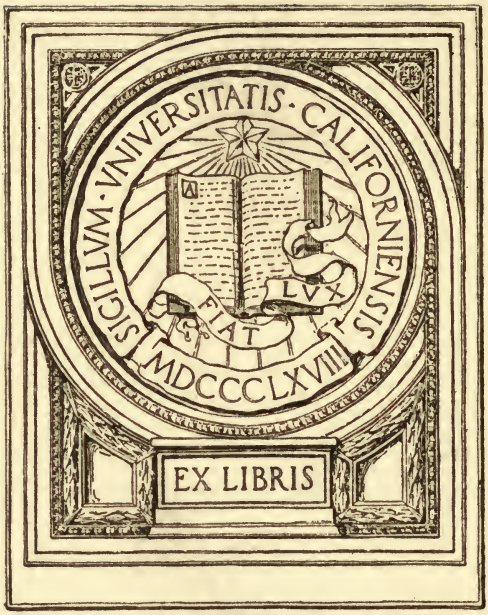
TODAY AND TOMORROW

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE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Today and Tomorrow

By

Charles Hanson Towne

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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CALIFORNIA

To MY FRIEND
MRS. FREDERIC J. FAULKS
(Theodosia Garrison)

371655

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TODAY AND TOMORROW

BEAUTY

(For Nellie Flagg)

I

WHEN I am dead, and hidden in the ground,
I know that after lonely days of sleep
I shall grow weary of my dreamless ease,
And stir the grass above me; long to lift
My narrow roof sealed with white crocuses,
And walk again upon the lovely earth.
I know that I shall say to the Lord God,
"Let me behold once more the flowery Spring,
The jocund April running through the world,"—
(For it will be in April when I rouse
With all reviving things that softly stir),
"Before I venture to the gates of heaven.
I pine for unforgotten loveliness,
I sicken for the beauty that I knew
In youth and age. Let them be mine again!"

BEAUTY (continued)

AND then I know that suddenly mine eyes
Shall see the splendor of the dawn; shall see
A halcyon morning shine on that same shore
Where as a child I watched the pomp of day
March across distant barricades of cloud,
And storm the very ramparts of the world.
I shall see hills emerge from the pale mist,
Their velvet wonder crowned with caps of snow,
And I shall marvel at them as of old.
I shall see rivers winding through the meads,
Long silver serpents hunting for the sea;
And on their banks the blue forget-me-nots,
Half hidden in the grass that covered me.
I shall read glimmering gospels in the book
Of April; deathless legends in the sun;
Psalms that the golden season sings forever;

BEAUTY (continued)

Green litanies and strangely visible prayers
Writ and embroidered on the cloth of Spring.
O, once again the antique page shall open,
The missal crowded with a curious scroll,
A new enchantment wrought of the old flowers.
And I shall praise again the miracle
Of beauty — beauty far too great to bear.

II

THE face of the Belovéd, who forgets?
It grows in splendor and light when we are gone;
Absent, its worth increases. Even so
The earth takes on new wonder when we die,
And we remember special sanctities,
Subtle delights that, living, we forgot: —
Color, and tone, and mood; some excellence
Of almost unperceivéd contour; some
Elusive loveliness, still lovelier

BEAUTY (continued)

Because it is, yet is not; something lost
Between high rapture and Love's deep despair.
O golden sunset, gone ere we can say
To the friend near us, "See that fringe of cloud,
Those galleons of glory in the West,
The furnace fires that burn the world's far rim!"
He turns, astonished, and the dream is gone,
And nevermore appears to him or me
With just that flush of wonder, just that form
Of dappled cloud.
So I have seen a road
In the lush Summer, heavy with the heat,
Shadowed by boughs that wilted in the sun,
Beyond all naming beautiful in the way
It coiled and twisted through the countryside.
One instant — and the shadows changed; a bird,

BEAUTY (continued)

And then another, bathed in swirls of dust;
A wagon rolled in sight; and as I moved
I lost the moment's rapture.
Nothing remains
Ever the same. The trees are laced to-
night
Against the sky; tomorrow they will be
Eager with one more leaf, and the young
moon,
A few hours older, will be climbing through
The filmy texture in another light,
And tufted smoke will be the border when
I look once more upon the pale design.
Nothing is quite the same. Therefore I
know
My brief delay upon the beautiful earth
Is not enough. Haunted with loveliness,
How can I fare away to other heavens,
Missing innumerable heavens here?
For April is the same — yet never the
same;
And Autumn never painted two gold leaves

BEAUTY (continued)

The eye could match. White hills against the sky
Repeat their wonder through the Winter days,
And yet the clouds behind them lift and break
Till the heart marvels at the shifting moods
Of cold magnificence and dignity.
Ah! we could watch forever the phantom rain,
And never see the ghostly army come
With the same shining helmets on their heads.
New songs would be in the wind though the wind sang
Forever; and new anthems in the sea,
New gestures in the waves, and various glints
Upon the tumbled wheat. There is no hour
When the old wonder is not strangely new.

BEAUTY (continued)

III

THEREFORE I know, when I have fallen asleep,
I shall awaken, hungry for the lost
Intangible beauty of the glowing earth.
And God will give me back the Spring again,
That I may read new meanings in the flowers,
Evoke new glory from the sudden leaf,
And haunt the heart of April for my joy.
I know that I have only tasted Life,
And Life is Beauty — Beauty too great to bear
In one brief pilgrimage upon the earth.

WAR TIDINGS

(1914)

IN a still, curtained room there came to me
Rumors of strife; tidings from oversea
Of conflict; the swift, flashing word that Peace
had ceased to be.

IN a safe city, where the steady roar
Of traffic thundered, came a voice that bore
News unbelievable of the wild hosts of War.

IN a still room! In a safe city! — here
Only the echo comes, but strangely clear.
What of the actual horror, what of the actual
tear!

FOR in my shelter I shuddered when I knew
That men accomplished desperate deeds and
slew
Their brothers on the battleground. Such
things men dare to do!

WAR TIDINGS (continued)

I THOUGHT of wasted harvests of gold grain,
Lost fields of plenty, drenched in the soft rain —
And I thought of a reaped harvest of unutterable pain.

I THOUGHT of the loud clashing of the sword,
The sound of guns and cannon in accord;
I thought of a king and his inexorable word.

IN a still room, "It cannot be!" I said.
"I will awaken and the dream be fled."
(But I heard the weeping of widows over the lonely dead.)

THOUGH I was far away and safe and still,
The distant sabres stabbed me. "Thus men kill,"
I said. "The smoke of battle hides a cross upon a hill!"

TO MY COUNTRY

(1914)

ONE told me he had heard it whispered:
"Lo!
The hour has come when Europe, desperate
With sudden war and terrible swift hate,
Rocks like a reed beneath the mighty blow.
Therefore shall we, in this, her time of woe,
Profit and prosper, since her ships of state
Go down in darkness. Kind, thrice kind is Fate,
Leaving our land secure, our grain to grow!"

AMERICA! They blaspheme and they lie
Who say these are the voices of your sons!
In this foul night when nations sink and die,
No thought is here save for the fallen ones
Who, underneath the ruin of old thrones
Suffer and bleed, and tell the world good-bye!

TO WILLIAM WATSON

In Answer to His Sonnet, "To America, Concerning England"

(1914)

POET! In England's hour of pain and stress,
When her white face was stricken with dumb despair,
We, knowing the red burden she must bear,
Wept as an orphan weeps. Yea, and no less
We wept for flowery France in her duress,
And for brave Belgium weighed with tears and care;
All lands in strife cried out for pity and prayer —
The worthy sunk in war's unworthiness.

THIS is no time for venom or for blame!—
Our peace is the white remnant left of God,
And when the shattered nations need a rod

TO WILLIAM WATSON (continued)

To lift them from the ashes of the flame,
Our strength preserved shall quicken them.
No shame
Shall be upon us for the path we trod!

ON THE SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA

1915

THERE is a mad hound in the world today,
A hideous Thing that snarls and breathes its breath
Of poison, frenzy, agony and death;
A beast, a monster that no hand can stay
In the old patient, everlasting way.
Now must the whole earth, sick with sorrow, dumb
With new despair, crush this delirium,
This foul Thing of destruction and dismay.

O THOU my country, be not slow to smite
This red abomination of the world.
In righteous wrath let banners be unfurled
Proclaiming thy proud purpose, thy stern might.

ON SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA (contd.)

Take heed, America! Thy breast is torn;
Speak now in thunder for the race unborn.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE

1914

(For Edna Aug)

THE little, simple people are they who shall go down,
Not Kings and Kaisers, Emperors, and unavailing Czars;
The good, God-fearing people who never saw a crown —
'Tis they who know the power of guns and feel the curse of Mars.

IT is the little people who must suffer and must weep,
They who do the wise things, the good things of the earth;
They who till the farmlands, they who softly reap
The grain and the harvest, and build fires upon the hearth.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE (continued)

THE good folk, the kind folk —'tis they who run toward Hell
When Kaiser and Emperor dare to urge them forth;
Forgotten are the homely ways when sounds the war god's bell —
From East and West they gather, from still vineyards of the North.

FROM orange-groves and wheat-fields, barley-brake and plain,
From business in the quiet towns, the sane work of the world,
They rush at the mad call, and face the stinging rain
Of shot and shell and cannon — for the King's flag is unfurled!

THE little, simple people now run a race with Death,
They who ran wise errands for the rulers of the earth;

THE LITTLE PEOPLE (continued)

They give their all, who built the world, they
give their blood, their breath,
And who shall blow to life again the fires
upon the hearth?

O UNREGARDFUL Kings, and ye who hold
high destinies,
Within your misnamed mighty hands,
how dare ye face your God
When ye have thrown your simple people,
people such as these,
The good folk, the little folk, face down-
ward on the sod?

FOR they are worth more than your crowns,
more than ye know;
They are the wise ones, and ye the fool-
ish. . . . Stay!
Keep them and protect them, before your
light burns low,
And the Lord God rebukes you on His
awful Judgment Day!

THE SHOT

(1915)

HE fired a million guns — and then ten million more;
But we, on the other side of the world, heard only the echoes of War.

HE fired a billion guns; but faintly, faintly we heard;
We thought of the fallen legions, and our hearts were torn and stirred.

BUT once, in the dead of night, in a lonely prison, hark!
He fired a shot that rang, rang through the terrible dark —

RANG through the whole wide world, like a bell of doom and death;
But it brought new life to a nation, though it hushed one woman's breath.

THE SHOT (continued)

ONE shot out of all of those that have made
the world a place
Of terror and of tears! — one shot, and
God's disgrace

IS branded deep on his brow, and deep on his
land as well;
But deep in the heart of the world is branded
one name —" Cavell! "

SILENCE

(For Ada Street)

I NEED not shout my faith. Thrice eloquent
Are quiet trees and the green listening sod.
Hushed are the stars, whose power is never spent;
The hills are mute — yet how they speak of God!

Norfolk, Connecticut.

AFTER HEARING TSCHAIKOWSKY

WHAT is the meaning of such beauty profound?
Ladders of utterance that lead the heart to heaven,
All senses driven
Up the high stairway to God's echoing halls,
Where angels ever keep Song's festivals.
Up, up, our souls are whirled —
Then back again to the old groaning world.
O rain of music suddenly that falls,
O thrilling storm of sound,
Now all our griefs are drowned
In the wild flood that flows
From the great heart of Melody where the Lord's trumpet blows!

DEEDS we might do,
Imperishable deeds of excellence,
If we were drenched forever in such sound.
Here are Life's wounds immense

HEARING TSCHAIKOWSKY (continued)

That we might help to heal — great wounds unbound,
And bleeding over the ground.
And the loud chords but break our heart with pity,
And bid us bleed with anguish for the pain
That lives in every lane
In every thundering city.

WARS we might quell,
Lift beggars out of hell,
Fling back to God the souls to Him now lost,
If on these billows of beauty we might be tossed
In hours now level with ease
And pale with dalliance too.
We might be captains in a world forlorn,
Not cowards whose days are torn
With craven fear, if on such sounds as these
Our poor crushed spirits could climb back again
To mercy, and to goodness, and to men.

HEARING TSCHAIKOWSKY (continued)

HIGH dreams! . . . And now the harmony
is stilled. . . .
What is it that within me has been
killed? . . .
If it should be all bitterness,
How I should bless
This ocean, this immortal sea of sound,
That healed me in its waves and tides pro-
found!

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

THIS is the sum of my distress —
Not that I need you more, but that I need you less;
That I can walk the ways of earth with strange forgetfulness.

THIS is the bitterness I know —
That a deep love like ours so suddenly should go,
Lost, like a fragile flower, under the snow.

HOW did it die? How did it fall?
How did this wild disaster follow Love's carnival?
Is Love to last for an hour? Is that to be all?

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS (continued)

TO have such need — and then have none!
To have known such rapture out in the fiery sun,
And then to say to each other, "It is over, and done!"

HOW can we know it was Love?
How can we know we tasted the sweets thereof?
Yet one of us was worthy! Which of us?
Time will prove!

TIME will prove! For the years will show
Which of us suffered, and lost—nay, won —and withstood the blow. . . .
It cannot be you; and if it be I, you will never know!

A BALLAD OF LOVE IN LONDON

I

I HAD heard of the grey of London, the fogs like a heavy shroud
That covered the ancient city and wrapped it in a cloud;
And I had read in many a book and heard from many a tongue
Of the long relentless London rain, whose song is never sung —

Grey days, sad days, days of dread and gloom,
And nights of dark foreboding like the silent tomb.

II

BUT when I went to London, where soon or late one goes,
I met an English maiden, with a face like an English rose;

A BALLAD OF LOVE (continued)

Her eyes were a bit of heaven, her hair was a
golden cloud —
And little I knew of the long, long rain, or
the fogs like a heavy shroud!

*In candlelight and firelight, beyond Trafalgar
Square,*
O London was a bright town, London was fair!

III

I HAD heard of the dripping eaves on lonely
Winter nights,
The mist that covered the Thames at dusk,
and the half-extinguished lights;
The loneliness in the heart of the world, the
desolation there —
But I found all joy, all love, all life, beyond
Trafalgar Square!

Sad town, mad town, town of tears and shame,
*But O, to me a glad town — and blesséd be her
name!*

A BALLAD OF LOVE (continued)

IV

I HAD dreamed of dimness, and darkness everywhere;
For folk had said that London was anything but fair;
And yet upon her withered cheek I spied a rose's red,
And in her eyes a glory, and a crown upon her head!

With lovelight and firelight and candlelight, how fair
Was wonderful old London beyond Trafalgar Square!

BABOON

AT eight o'clock in the evening,
And at two in the afternoon
The monster curtains open,
The fiddles creak and croon;
And then I bow to the people —
A lumbering baboon.

I WONDER why I do it?
Why do the humans stare
From even rows of shadow
Behind the footlights' glare?
Why do I go through my weary tricks
On a table and a chair?

THEY laugh and clap and giggle,
They never seem to tire,
For I am quite amusing
As I dance upon a wire,
Or leap, at my master's signal,
Through golden hoops of fire.

BABOON (continued)

I CANNOT smile, like the people,
I cannot speak at all;
I pirouette insanely
In the foolish carnival;
Yet could I laugh, O, I would laugh
When the velvet curtains fall!

FOR I wonder why those people
Sit in such even rows,
And smile at my useless knowledge,
Laugh at my mincing toes,
And dream that they have wisdom! —
How little a human knows!

AND why do they always gather
In houses bright and hot,
When they might be out in the open
In a place I've never forgot?
Why do they hive in a shell like this,
And bid me share their lot?

BABOON (continued)

AND why is my life a schedule,
Run by rote and rule?
I was not meant for theatres,
I was not made for school;
I was not meant to caper here,
A thing of ridicule!

I WAS not meant to be the slave
Of a man in a shiny suit,
To bring the golden dollars in,
To stand up and salute;
The good God put me in the world
To be a happy brute!

BUT at eight o'clock each evening,
And at two in the afternoon
The monster curtains open,
The fiddles creak and croon;
And I bow to the senseless people —
A sensible baboon!

A WOMAN OF THE STREETS

I WISH I had not seen them —
Peach bloom, pear bloom and apple blossom white,
Swaying in the wind like candles in the night.
I wish I had not seen them hanging on the bough —
For I am in my city chains, city weary now.

I WISH I had not seen them —
Long, long lanes, and hawthorn rows of glory,
Bright-bannered mornings with the good God's ancient story
Writ in red embroidery on the far, high hills —
I wish I had not seen them, for now their memory kills.

A WOMAN OF THE STREETS (continued)

I WISH I had not seen them —
The ranks of scarlet poppies dancing in the corn
When the world lay easy on the heart of the morn;
And the shining battalions of the surging rain —
I wish I had not seen them, for they bring me pain.

THE hard, grim stones in the grey old town,
The dull days, the sad days, they weigh me down.
But heavier is my soul for the lost things good and sweet —
Oh, I wish I could not see them when I walk the iron street!

CITY ROOFS

(From the Metropolitan Tower)

ROOF-TOPS, roof-tops, what do you cover?
Sad folk, bad folk, and many a glowing lover;
Wise people, simple people, children of despair —
Roof-tops, roof-tops, hiding pain and care.

ROOF-TOPS, roof-tops, O what sin you're knowing,
While above you in the sky the white clouds are blowing;
While beneath you, agony and dolor and grim strife
Fight the olden battle, the olden war of Life.

ROOF-TOPS, roof-tops, cover up their shame —
Wretched souls, prisoned souls too piteous to name;

CITY ROOFS (continued)

Man himself hath built you all to hide away
the stars —
Roof-tops, roof-tops, you hide ten million
scars.

ROOF-TOPS, roof-tops, well I know you
cover
Many solemn tragedies, and many a lonely
lover;
But ah! you hide the good that lives in the
throbbing city —
Patient wives, and tenderness, forgiveness,
faith, and pity.

ROOF-TOPS, roof-tops, this is what I won-
der:
You are thick as poisonous plants, thick the
people under;
Yet roofless, and homeless, and shelterless
they roam,
The driftwood of the town who have no roof-
top, and no home!

THE LITTLE STREET WHERE SHE DIED

I WENT to the little street,
The little street where she died,
And it seemed to me as I turned the Square
That the very pavements sighed.
And the blinds stared, vacant-eyed,
When I went to the little street,
The little street where she died.

I THOUGHT of the days when she leaned
Out of the casement there,
And always watched for me
As I turned from the quiet Square;
And the nights when I watched for the flare
Of her lamp at the window-pane —
A beacon through the rain. . . .

STREET WHERE SHE DIED (cont.)

LAST night I went to the street,
The little street where she died,
But I could not see, for my tears,
The house of love denied.
The winds, like spirits, sighed. . . .
Then a star in heaven flashed
Over the street where she died.

VISION

SOMETIMES, in a crowded street I see
The faces of those that love, and those that are loved.
And in the rush of the traffic,
The thundering sounds of the city, I pause,
Wondering about their loves — which are their lives.

I KNOW them by their eyes, and by their glances;
I know them in a way I may not name,
And I know those that have won and those that have lost
In the eternal battle of the world.
But they that have lost have not always a sad countenance;
Sometimes their lips smile,
As if with an old comprehension,

VISION (continued)

And one might be deceived, save for the tragic eyes —
The smiling, yet unsmiling eyes above the mouth.
Those eyes have read in the great Book of Love,
And they are changed, they are changed forever.
And those lips have kissed the pages of the book,
And they too are changed forever.
Only, lips can lie — but eyes can never deceive.

AND those that have won — not always do they smile.
Often they seem to be secretly weeping,
As if with a joy too terrible to bear. . . .
Strange, strange are the countenances of those that love.

VISION (continued)

I KNOW them all — brothers and sisters of Love.
I know them, and they know me too.
I can tell by their eyes —
Their eyes that follow me with knowledge,
With pity, with solemn understanding.

THE CHILDREN IN THE CORRIDORS

I HAVE seen children playing in the corridors
of great hotels —
Pathetic, lonely little creatures,
Surrounded by rich velvet curtains and disinterested nurses,
Trying to play hide-and-seek quietly in the hushed hallways,
Behind shining pillars, as country children play behind trees;
Or teasing the bell-boys, for lack of other companionship,
As the bell-boys hurry about their duties.

THESE are the children that seldom see their parents;
They are, sadly enough, the product of accident,
And their parents are indifferent to them.

CHILDREN IN THE CORRIDORS (cont.)

They are tragic little beings;
I am sorry for them with as much pity
As one can retain who lives forever in a crowded metropolis.
In the afternoons I have seen their nurses take them
Out of the silent corridors of the big hotels
Into the noisy stone corridors of the streets,
And parade them solemnly up and down, up and down,
As if they were mere wooden images instead of human beings.
And always the wise little children's eyes follow other little children
Who are in a like predicament,
As if to say, if they could, "We are all one Masonic breed,
And we understand one another."

THEY are led to the broader corridor of the Avenue,
And toward the Park, with its pitiful spaces of green,

CHILDREN IN THE CORRIDORS (cont.)

Its gravel walks, and its inhospitable signs
That warn them from the grass. They are always surrounded by walls;
There is never any real freedom, even in the Park,
And the grey, great buildings, the immaculate hotels,
Are visible in the near distance, and seem to say,
"You cannot escape us! Our windows are eyes that watch you,
And we shall call you back soon."

THESE children have never learned to play;
They have never learned the wonder of real companionship
With some one who loves them. I pity them more than I pity
The children of poorer people, for the children of poorer people are loved,
And these are cast out because they are in the way,
And given into the keeping of paid servants

CHILDREN IN THE CORRIDORS (cont.)

Who slight them or secretly frighten them.
They live forever in a state of semi-neglect,
And they will grow up — God pity them! —
Selfish, inconsequential men and women;
For their characters are formed in corridors,
And corridors are narrow, dim places.

MYSTERIES

LIFE holds unmeasured sanctities,
Immortal glories — sun, and moon,
The quiet stars, the western skies,
And the deep wonder of ripe June;

THE hills, the hosts of flowers; the mood
Of Autumn, and the rippling rain;
Beauty no heart has understood,
Passion that makes no moment vain.

IT is so strange — this gift of breath,
This pageant of the earth and sea;
Yet stranger far than Life or Death
Is this, O Love — your need of me.

AFTER

DRENCHED, after rain,
The lilacs tremble again
In the cool wind, and pour
Their fragrance round my door.

CRUSHED, when Love dies,
Bravely her spirit cries;
But through Life's empty room,
O the perfume!

RISEN INDEED!

HOW can I doubt that He is risen indeed,
Since at the Spring's exultant birth
Through His green earth
I see the flowering of each hidden seed,
And feel again the old immortal need?

HOW can I doubt, when through white lanes I pass,
Seeing the ancient beauty on the boughs
In God's great house,
Hearing the bells at this Aprilian Mass,
Seeing the congregation of the grass?

HOW can I doubt? Nay, let me bow my head,
Before the wonder of the April flame,
In tears and shame,
Since for one instant (O black moment of dread!)
I dared to think that the great Lord was dead!

SPRING NIGHTS

SPRING nights have come again, with their old pity,
Spring nights of simple fragrance, to the sad city.

SEE how the long lanes filled with blue lights
Wake to a strange rapture in the Spring nights!

ALMOST I think I heard in the hushed dark,
Down yonder thoroughfare, close to the park,

VOICES of ghostly birds, bright after rain,
Singing the city's soul clean of its pain.

SPRING nights, glad Spring nights, with their old pity,
Ah! how we need them here in the sad city!

THE LOVER

WOUND me! Yea, break my heart, if, breaking it
Thou dost acquire mysterious delight.
Torture my spirit through an aching night,
Fill me with pain and longing exquisite,
If at the last for me thy lamp be lit,
And once again I hold thee in my sight.
Gladly I suffer, being Love's eremite;
And if I judged thee, lo! I would acquit.

FOR grief through thee is dearer than the bliss,
The empty glory of acclaiming men;
Count me thy vassal, if but once thy kiss
Redeem thy wrath; — then wound me,
Love, again! —
For I do dread no moment more than this:
Thy failure to afflict me. Love dies then!

AT A THÉ DANSANT

WHEN I saw them whirling and twirling
In the golden afternoon;
When I heard the loud band playing
Its reckless, shameless tune;

WHEN I saw their painted faces
Drifting wildly by,
I too forgot the glory
Of the wonderful Spring sky.

OUTSIDE, the world was singing
Its marvellous old song;
I thought of scented woodlands
Far from this maddened throng;

I THOUGHT of the great Silence
More eloquent than sound,
Of the music in the meadows,
The gospel of the ground.

AT A THÉ DANSANT (continued)

AND I thought: How can they dance here,
In the golden afternoon,
When the earth is wild with rapture,
And Spring will vanish soon?

THE scented air — I loathed it,
As the dancers hurried by. . . .
I looked through a little window
At the stillness of the sky.

THEN suddenly the music
Ended in one loud flare. . . .
The dancers turned to their goblets —
I turned to drink God's air.

IN AN OLD CAFÉ

ONE April evening, when the stars
Hung like pale moths within the sky,
We loitered in an old café,
And watched the moon come, you and I.

THE people passed, as in a dream;
The hansoms lurched against the light;
Blue globes were twinkling up the street,
Heralds of the great city night.

AND as the film of Life rolled by,
Beggar and prince before us there,
We thought of all Life's ecstasy,
And all its deep despair.

AND in our heaven we forgot
That we were of the picture too;
Others, who watched our joy that night,
Wondered, and never knew.

SUPREME MOMENTS

The highest moments are touched with tears
Through our brief years.

WE weep at birth;
We weep — if it be Love indeed that wakes —
When first Love takes
Our hearts and souls and shows us a new heaven
And a new earth.
We weep when friends forsake us; and we weep
When one beloved falls quietly asleep.

Lord God, let it be given
That, when Death calls us down the shadowy years,
For our poor passing there may be soft tears;
Our going a moment supreme
To one who hailed us in Life's mighty dream.

LOVE CAN DIE

LOVE can die — Love can vanish,
O remember this, vain heart.
Love that can all sorrow banish,
Love, too, can depart.

HOLD Love close — fold Love surely
In the glowing days that fly;
Bind him with thy faith securely,
Lest he weep — and die!

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO THE MANUSCRIPT OF ENDYMION

(In Mr. Morgan's Library)

I DARED not dream that this dream could
come true:
That I was bending over that yellow page
Lit with his words — our boy, our poet, our
sage —
And that I touched the parchment, old yet
new,
Whereon his fingers once had been. I grew
Strangely afraid, as if some heritage
Of wonder from a distant, holy age
Had suddenly fallen on me, like soft dew.

"A THING of beauty is a joy forever. . . ."
There
I read his lovely line, what time I dipped
Into that hushed and haunted manuscript

MANUSCRIPT OF ENDYMION (continued)

That Love and Time have made even lovelier.
Oh, I could only dream; yea, dream and weep. . . .
Was it a vision? — Did I wake or sleep?

IN A PICTURE-GALLERY

(A Private View)

ARROGANT, richly at ease,
And difficult to please,
I saw fine women come
To gaze on dreams like these:

THE visions of his heart
That trembled to impart
Some fragment of his thought
Through the strange lips of Art.

IN silk and bright brocade,
In green and gold arrayed,
They came to this still room
To see what he had made.

THEY loitered just a bit:
"Ah! that is exquisite! —
That touch — that flash — that tone —
I'm crazy over it!"

IN A PICTURE-GALLERY (continued)

THEY gossiped, smiled and posed;
A *grande dame* frankly dozed,
Woke with a start, moved on —
And the great portals closed.

IN that hushed room were stored
High dreams! . . . Their motors roared
Without; yet once or twice each Spring —
Well, one *had* to be bored!

ASSUNTA

THE little nun, Assunta,
When her sisters were at prayer,
Crept out one April morning
Upon the convent stair,
And listened to the robins
That sang in God's sweet air.

"O BLITHE and brave Franciscans!"
The little sister said,
"I trembled when I heard you
At daybreak on my bed,
And longed to sing my matins
With you, when dawn grew red.

"FRAIL choristers from heaven,
Is it a sin for me
To listen to your music,
Your holy ecstasy?
Or does the good St. Francis
Look down, and smile to see?

ASSUNTA (continued)

"MY sisters chant responses
In the strange hush and gloom;
But O, sometimes I sicken
For the green world's wide room,
Long for the benediction
Of bird and bee and bloom!

"IF it be sin, God pardon
A wayward child. . . . Yet sing,
Higher, and even higher,
And let your voices ring,
Mad trumpeters of April,
Interpreters of Spring." . . .

THE little nun, Assunta,
Died on an April day;
The sisters knelt around her
In sombre black and grey,
Singing their *Nunc Dimittis,*
Forgetting not to pray.

ASSUNTA (continued)

OUTSIDE, her friends, the robins
Sang for the wayward child;
Higher, and even higher,
Rang out their requiem wild;
And the sad sisters wondered
When the little dead nun smiled.

LOVE'S SILENCES

THERE are great silences in a great love,
And fools are they who vainly strive to reach
Those shining shores beyond the verge of speech,
Where none should fare — not even the white dove
That hides forever in true lovers' souls,
And blesses them with stillness. There are deeps
That none should desecrate; jealous, Love keeps
Sure watch when passion's ocean round her rolls.

THESE calms are Love's hid meaning; they contain
The covenant and gospel of Love's years,
The very Bread of beauty and the Wine.

LOVE'S SILENCES (continued)

O never dream to enter that dim fane,
Flooded with knowledge and Love's awful tears,
But bow before the hush that is divine.

OLD JOHNNY VALENTINE

(For A. E. Thomas)

MY friend had died — old Johnny Valentine,
Who loved to laugh, and waited for my jokes
Each Summer when I went to Gloucester. We
Would sit in his small cabin on the coast,
Watching the blue sea and the blowing sails,
And in the night the silver stars and moon.
Then I would tell him, with our pipes and ale,
The little jests he loved — the city rhymes
That tickled him until he laughed — and cried.

OLD Johnny died last Spring. It was in May
When the world woke with apple-blossoms white,
And the grass whispered at his cabin door.

OLD JOHNNY VALENTINE (continued)

Of course I went up to his funeral:
I wanted one last glimpse of that good face,
Brown, even in death — those weather-
beaten cheeks.

AND after we had laid him in the ground
Under a tree that grew outside his gate,
I thought of all his laughter meant to me —
That choking laughter, gay and innocent,
Innocent as a child's. And then I thought
Of the new jests that he had never heard,
The bright collection for the coming June,
The "city harvest," as he called them; all
The limericks that grew along Broadway.

HE would have loved them, was my natural
thought;
And so I told them to the neighborhood —
His cronies and companions; the small
crowd
That loved him almost as I loved him. Yes,
I dared to make them laugh, because I knew
He would have liked to know that even now

OLD JOHNNY VALENTINE (continued)

Humor and wit were dancing through the
world.
And as I told my jokes, I thought I heard
The apple-blossoms shake in a light wind —
Or was it Johnny Valentine who laughed?

THE QUARREL

IN a house behind me in the crowded city
I heard a man and woman quarreling.
He called her shocking names, and she replied
With bitter expletives that I forget.
I only know I never dreamed such words
Could fall from human lips, as high and higher
Their angry voices rose in sudden wrath.
And then I heard a blow — a sounding fist —
And shuddered at the silence following,
A silence far more terrible than the storm.
Heads leaned from windows; all the neighborhood
Wondered, as I had wondered, what it meant.

NEXT day I saw the young wife in the yard,
Hanging out linen — shirts and handkerchiefs,
And then brown socks and heavy underclothes.

THE QUARREL (continued)

Upon one cheek she bore a purple mark,
And I had never thought to see a face
So tragic in a woman as young as she.
And in a moment the brawny husband came
With a white empty crib and cans of paint;
And while the woman pinned the clothing up,
He set to work with brushes for an hour.
And every little while she spoke to him:
"It's going to look real nice, Sam."
"Yes," said he.
Or, "After that, suppose you fetch some coal —
I think the fire needs it." "All right, Kate. . . .
Let's have a steak for supper." "Sure we will."
And presently, when she was going in,
I saw her put her hand upon his shoulder,
And he looked up and smiled.
I turned away,
And marveled at this life, but most of all
At love, and the strange riddle of the world.

ART

ART is a flaming mistress,
Jealous, proud and elate;
Deep in her heart is heaven,
Deep in her mind is hate.

NEVER, never forsake her!
The ways of her love, who knows?
Today, she is thine forever;
Tomorrow, forever she goes.

NOT hers the tragic ending —
To nobler loves she fares,
Nor turns for a last swift parting,
Remembers not, nor cares.

THE QUIET YEARS

THE days run by on golden feet,
The old rain falls, the old wind blows,
And every June our spirits greet
Red repetitions of the rose.

THE ancient trees — how wise are they!
And tides and sunsets, stars and grass;
Ah! friends and loves may pass away,
But these true friends, they never pass.

THEY come again; they do not fail,
The Summer glory, Autumn tears;
The punctual moon, whose face is pale —
How kind are all the quiet years!

TO A CERTAIN LITTLE BOY

(Alexander Neil Smith)
With a Silver Cup, on the Day of His Christening

WHEN you are really quite grown up,
Too big to drain this little cup,
I hope the gods are kind, my boy,
And fill Life's cup with magic joy.
I pray that from a golden bowl
You may drink wisdom for your soul,
And in the chalice of the years
Find much of peace, and less of tears;
Find knowledge, beauty, faith, and love,
And every blessing from above;
But most of all, in goodly share,
Yourself pour Human Kindness there.

A SONG WHILE LOVING

THOU who hast been as starlight in my darkness,
Sun after blinding rain, peace after war;
Thou who hast been, through the long ages,
All I have waited for;
Now, in the noon of our rapture,
Thee I adore.

THEE I adore! Since it is through thee I hearken
To a new song in the winds that shake the trees;
Through thee I speak a new language,
Suffer new ecstasies;
Yea, and through thee drain Life's golden goblet
Unto the lees.

A SONG WHILE LOVING (continued)

THIS is the sum of my joy: that I hold you,
Fold you at last, and in the midst of my pride,
Say, "It is she who is with me
Here, close, close at my side!"
Love, it is something to know when one's hour
Is glorified!

TO know, and to speak of the glory! To shout it
Under the blue of high heaven, and say,
"This is our moment, this is a love that is perfect;
At last, at last we have found the way!
Would we could show it to those still blinded. . . .
Love, let us pray!"

ONE OF THE PREDESTINED

I READ it in your face
That you will leave us, young;
You will go from this place
Before your song is sung.

HOW avidly you take
Life's cup, and drink its wine,
Ere it shall fall and break,
Revealing Death's dark sign.

O STRANGE and troubled eyes,
Within those depths I see
Immortal mysteries,
Hints of Eternity.

YOU are to pass so soon,
Fragile as a bright flower. . . .
How sweet to be the moon,
If only for an hour!

TAKE THOU THE ROSE

TAKE thou the rose with all its beauty red,
Nor strive the secret of its flame to guess;
Pluck not one petal, lest the dream be fled,
Vanished the loveliness.

TAKE the one Love with all its rapture; yea,
With all its ruin and sorrow. Love is sweet;
Seek not its fault, lest on some awful day
Love crumble at thy feet.

RETREAT

(For F. Walter Taylor)

I KNOW a bookshop in a quiet street
Close to the flame and thunder of Broadway,
A little heaven, a refuge and retreat
From the loud murmur of the staring day.

THERE, in the hush, with voices of the past
Singing far songs — Wordsworth and Keats and Poe —
Often I linger, dipping in the last
Bright volume, or some ancient folio.

THE world goes by; haply is lost — well lost,
But old worlds rise before me in this place,
And in some shining book, by Love embossed,
I read the record of a nobler race.

RETREAT (continued)

I READ of pomp and chivalry and pride,
Or the light laughter of a quiet age;
I dwell in moonlight on a distant tide,
What time I thumb and turn some yellow page.

I HEAR the rustle of imperial lace,
I dream of glory and strong, fighting men. . . .
The lamps expire, and in the chimney-place
The last red embers burn, go out; and then

I FIND myself one of the evening crowd,
Facing the world that thrills me as before.
But O that moment when they spoke aloud —
Shakespeare and Dante — through Death's hidden door!

THE PRISON

I WENT through a crowded city —
A city within my own —
Whose houses were of iron
And terrible grey stone.

I SAW each awful doorway
With clanging lock and key,
And faces white behind them,
Most pitiful to me.

THERE was a patient silence
Within this town of tears,
That told me more than lips could
Of long, bleak, maddening years.

THAT silence — and those faces!
They haunt me all the while;
Yet why should dead men whisper,
And why should dead men smile?

RACING WITH THE RAIN

WE were rushing through the valley, and my
friend was at the wheel;
The highway lay before us like a rod of
burnished steel.
There was dust upon our motor, there was
dust before our eyes,
But the live thing sped like magic under-
neath the Summer skies.

OF a sudden came a turning, and we heard a
distant drum.
"It is thunder!" cried my comrade. "And
the storm will quickly come."
At his words I looked behind us — yes,
black clouds were scurrying on.
"Now for speed!" I told my comrade.
"It's five miles to Avalon!"

RACING WITH THE RAIN (continued)

THERE'S a flowing road to Newbright that
is like a silver snake;
It's the kind of road that every reckless racer
loves to take.
Now it lay white in the distance for a good
three miles or more,
And beside it was a deep stretch of the
curved Atlantic shore.

ON my hand there fell a raindrop like a signal
from on high;
Black and blacker sped the storm-clouds in
the wide tempestuous sky.
Close behind us now that army of the pur-
ple hosts of rain,
And above us, marching, marching, with a
thundering refrain.

JUST a touch upon a tiny bit of metal, and we
whirled
Swifter than the swiftest eagle flying high
above the world.

RACING WITH THE RAIN (continued)

Swift as water down Niagara, plunging madly through the air,
On, and on we raced; the lightning flashed around us everywhere.

RANKS of blue rain surged behind us. Would they drench us, would they come
Like a sudden bright battalion filled with war's delirium?
Would their gleaming swords surround us, cleave our cheeks, or goad us on
Faster, faster, on that flowing road that led to Avalon?

NOW the earth was dark around us, but we had no need of lamps,
For the lightning blazed before us, searchlights from celestial camps.
Far ahead we saw the roadway like a shining, endless track,
And we heard that army breathing, breathing closer at our back.

RACING WITH THE RAIN (continued)

WHO would mind a healthy drenching?
Surely not my friend and I!
Let the torrents pour upon us — we could
still be warm and dry!
But the race was for the glory and the tri-
umph we would feel
If we beat our blue pursuers — beat them
with a bit of steel!

PRIDE of conquest, zest of winning, tang of
mad achievement — these
Were the laurel we would gather, and the
crown that we would seize!
Naught but victory did we dream of, effort
wearing her bright bays;
Our reward the joy of striving, and no man's
indulgent praise!

SEE! the spires of home before us! Ah! the
roofs of Avalon!
But the jealous rain behind us, now it pressed
more madly on!

RACING WITH THE RAIN (continued)

Furious at our seeming triumph, swift it sent its first brigades
On the wind to touch our shoulders with their glowing silver blades.

BUT we reached the village court-house, and our haven lay ahead,
Underneath the arching elm-trees that were hospitably spread
Like a monstrous, thick umbrella far along the avenue;
Dauntless followed those battalions, shining ranks and ranks of blue.

STILL the dust was on our motor, still the dust before us lay,
When, out from the drooping elm-trees we were on the roofless way.
Ah! the open door before us! One mad plunge, our glad disdain —
Safe at last! For we had beaten those mad regiments of rain!

THE VICTORS

THEY have triumphed who have died;
They have passed the porches wide,
Leading from the House of Night
To the splendid lawns of light.
They have gone on that far road
Leading to their new abode,
And from curtained casements we
Watch their going wistfully.

AH! that turn, that glimpse! That last
Wondering where their feet have passed!
They have read new meanings, they
Who have found the open way.
Now they know that hill and glen
Far beyond our mortal ken,
And they know why Winter turns
Into April; why Youth burns
With its dreams that go to rust,
Why men falter, and yet trust;

THE VICTORS (continued)

Why the Autumn grieves and sighs
Underneath the brooding skies;
Why the grass, with punctual feet,
Comes in Spring our eyes to greet,
And white dawn succeeds white dawn,
And the moon shines on and on.

THEY have left our House of Night,
Faring to the bournes of light.
Grieve not for them; rather, say,
" They are victors on the way;
They have won, for they have read
The bright secrets of the dead;
And they gain the deep unknown,
Hearing Life's strange undertone.
In the race across the days
They are victors; theirs the praise,
Theirs the glory and the pride —
They have triumphed, having died! "

THE END

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